

The vessel carries a crew of four hundred and fifty, and has accommodations for more than two thousand people. One may wonder why a steam ship carries so large a crew, but when he reflects that the care of a ship like the "Oceanic" requires the labors of forty engineers, one hundred and sixty coal shovellers, besides officers, an army of stewards, cooks and scrubbers, he will realize that the complement is none too large. Speaking of the scrubbers reminds me of my first night at sea. The night was a perfect one; the moon was full and its light covered the whole sea and glorified it. There was just enough motion to the water for the waves to catch up the moon beams and reflect them back in a long, trembling lane of light, stretching out toward where the moon was sailing overhead. The scene, to a landsman, was so bewitchingly beautiful that I was loath to leave the deck even when the hour for retiring came. But when, at last, I did go below, "to court the drowsy god," I found my berth so comfortable, and the motion of the vessel so agreeable, that I fell asleep almost at once. I do not know how long I had slept when something awoke me. I heard an unusual noise. It was an ominous, gasping, swishing sound which seemed to come from nowhere in particular, but to be all about me. After listening intently for awhile I concluded there was but one thing in the world could make a noise like that; it was a pump! The vessel was leaking and they were working the pumps to keep her afloat! Now that I had decided what was producing the noise, I easily recognized the gasping, sucking sound of the pumps—for there were at least two of them working regularly—and the swishing of the water. I wondered how bad the leak was, and whether they would be able to manage it. Then the noise stopped. I went to sleep again. Nobody seemed to be concerned about it the next morning, and I asked one of the crew if they had not been working the pumps during the night, and when I described the sounds I had heard, he laughed and said, "That was only the scrubbers holy-stoning the deck." I learned there that the decks are not only washed, but polished with blocks of stone something like pumice stone, and that it was the sound produced by rubbing these stones back and forth on the wet deck that had given me such a fright.

We had a most delightful trip, the weather being propitious the whole time, and the sea as smooth as the proverbial "mill pond," and in spite of my first night's experience, I enjoyed it immensely. The cuisine was excellent equal at every point to that of a first-class hotel. Three meals and a luncheon were served every day, and so marvelous is the power of the salt sea air to sharpen the appetite, that four meals a day are none too many. After a day or two the reserve, natural and proper to be observed between strangers on shore, is broken down on board ship, and the passengers become for the time, like members of one family. Many delightful acquaintances are made and even friendships

formed which continue after the ship has entered her port. No better conditions for promoting enjoyment and health can be provided anywhere, than are found on a great ocean liner, when the weather is fine. Separation from business and its cares, absence of noise, luxurious surroundings, congenial companionship, the mysterious, restful influence of the sea, good wholesome food in variety so great as to tempt the appetite, innocent sports and games in the open air on deck, access to a free library stocked with well selected books, the witchery of music, when the home songs are sung in chorus by the passengers gathered together in the moonlight on the upper deck, the bracing, health-giving air, laden with salt and as exhilarating as wine, these, all together, are enough to make the sick well, and the despondent to forget his melancholy.

My attention was drawn, the first day on board, to a man who seemed little more than an animated corpse. He told me that he was an insurance clerk; that his close attention to business had undermined his health and that he was on the verge of nervous prostration. The doctor advised a sea voyage, but to prepare for it required additional work for a few weeks. He said he felt that every stroke of the pen was an additional nail in his coffin, but the excitement of preparing for the trip and of bidding his family good-bye, had kept him up, but now that it was all over, the reaction had set in. He seemed about as far gone and as completely disheartened as any person I ever saw. The next morning I hunted him up again. He told me he was too nervous to sleep, that he wasn't able to eat, and that he had expected to die during the night. During the trip I hunted him out quite often, and tried to cheer him up all I could, and so marvelous were the healing influences of the sea, that by the time we reached Queenstown, he was one of the happiest and most cheerful passengers on board, apparently in almost perfect health, able to eat and to sleep like any of the rest of us.

But this letter is already too long, and I shall immediately close it by promising to begin the next at Queenstown and describe my trip thru Ireland.

The Home

Christmas as We Grow Older

E. HERBRUCK

"Christmas comes but once a year," sang one of the old poets, intimating that it is one of the happiest of our holidays, and so full of good cheer that we ought to enjoy it all we can. Indeed, Christmas occupies the foremost place among all our holidays, and it has bound about its brow a chaplet of very hallowed associations, and we can almost as readily count up our years by Christmases as we do by birthdays. If Christmas comes but once a year, it comes quickly. It seems but yesterday we saw the forests ablaze in their coat of many colors, and the sumac

wind along the fence rows like a band of fire, while the roadsides were lined with asters and gentians, and the meadows aglow with the goldenrod; and today the world lies chill, the fields are covered with snow, and the frost king is abroad in the land. We pile high the fuel on the fire, so that we may have it warm within, even tho it be cold without.

"Let us throw more logs on the fire,
We have need of a cheerful light;
And close round the hearth together,
For the wind has risen tonight."

There is no season or holiday that unlocks the memory as this, or makes the heart so tender. Even the flinty heart of old Scrooge, says the great novelist, grew soft, tho it had been hard as adamant, as he remembered the Christmas carols sung at his keyhole the night before, and which caused him to slide his hand into his pocket to feel for his wallet. If there is one day of the year when neighbors think kindly of each other, or when a gleam of sunshine steals over the miser's heart, it is this. There seems to be in the atmosphere the spirit of the song, "Peace on earth, good will to men." The old grow young again, the poor rich, the hardened tender, and the hearts of all beat high with expectation of

"The Christmas that shall yet be,
Of undying joy in that fadeless land,
Where shall fall no tears thru the countless years,
That are at the King's right hand."

It has come again. Not the Christmas of long ago, but Christmas still, and we will celebrate it. We will sit by the fire and let the tide of thought roll in upon our hearts. We will think of the Christ child who came so many years ago, and is even now knocking at our hearts for entrance. We will share in the festivities with glad, yet sad and tender, hearts, as we think of the departed friends who in other years made bright the happy Christmas time. They are not forgotten. Forgotten? No, for to day, as we look out upon the quiet place of graves where they sleep so peacefully, they come marching before us, and we link their names and memories with Him who came as a precious gift to their glad hearts. They are not forgotten. They sit by our side. They sing the old songs, they speak the well-remembered, tender words, and their memory will always be fresh in our hearts.

Whatever the day may be, we must never lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas. It must ever rest as a background to all our joy and festivity. Let Christmas come. Let it be enjoyed. Let the home be bright and cheerful, and, above all, let the heavenly glow of a Christlike feeling shine in our hearts, so that friend and stranger will see that we have the kindly spirit of the great Savior who loved us. Tho we may be homeless here, tho no kind roof will admit us under its shelter to share its Christmas cheer, yet we know that beyond the snow covered graves, beyond the stars which shine so tranquilly, we shall walk with the loved ones who visit us in our waking thoughts, and who